

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47) yesterday delivered an opening statement and questioned key military officials at the first Subcommittee on Strategic Forces hearing of the 112th Congress. Rep. Sanchez serves as Ranking Member of the Subcommittee and is a senior member of the House Armed Services Committee. Rep. Sanchez was specifically interested in a South Korean report suggesting that National Security Council WMD Czar Dr. Gary Samore left open the possibility that the United States might introduce tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula.

“A recent report has indicated the possibility that the United States might introduce tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula if South Korea made such a request,” said Sanchez. “Follow up comments – meant to clarify this report – only added confusion, and I request clarification to our policy with regards to forward-based tactical nuclear weapons in Korea.”

Rep. Sanchez also delivered the following opening statement:□

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Statement of Ranking Member Loretta Sanchez

Subcommittee on Strategic Forces

House Armed Services Committee

Hearing on “The Status of U.S. Strategic Forces”

March 2, 2011□

Thank you Chairman Turner. I look very forward to serving with you and the Members on our Subcommittee, and to the work we will accomplish together.

I would also like to recognize and thank Mr. Langevin for his strong and steady leadership of this Subcommittee in the last Congress.

I would like to join Chairman Turner in welcoming our witnesses to our first Strategic Forces hearing of the 112th Congress.

We look forward to receiving testimony from General Kehler and Dr. Miller, to examine the strategic posture of the United States and the status of our strategic forces, including our nuclear weapons programs, missile defense systems, and military space programs.

I also enjoyed meeting you all individually to talk about your priorities and discuss working together down the road.

I would also like to thank Dr. Perry and Dr. Payne who will provide their views in the context of the recommendations made by the Commission to Assess the Nuclear Posture of the United States.

I am sorry that Secretary Schlesinger could not join us today.

In April 2009, President Obama committed to working toward a world free of nuclear weapons.

Last year, the Administration took several important steps to implement progress toward this long-term vision and to provide guidance with regard to our strategic forces.

First on nuclear forces: The President announced its Nuclear Posture Review in April last year which outlined a plan to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons while committing to maintaining our nuclear deterrent to reliably defend our country and our allies.

This blueprint addressed the most pressing threats to US security – the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries and or to terrorists.

I am particularly concerned that programs that underpin the maintenance of our nuclear deterrent and urgent non-proliferation efforts did not receive the FY11 requested level of funding in the House-passed Continuing Resolution.

In fact, I and my fellow Democratic colleagues on this subcommittee sent a letter to Chairman Paul Ryan expressing concerns over these cuts and stressing the importance of strengthening this country's nuclear threat reduction efforts and the important work carried out at the Lawrence Livermore, Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories.

These are important efforts that will reduce the risk of nuclear terrorism while maintaining a strong deterrent at lower levels.

I am pleased that the Administration successfully completed and ratified the New START Treaty with Russia.

It is an important step in dealing with nuclear reductions and nuclear non-proliferation.

It reduced the legal limit of deployed strategic nuclear weapons and reestablished crucial verification measures, which provide us legally-binding assurances that Russia is complying with its obligations under the Treaty.

It also enabled a re-set of relations with Russia.

This re-engagement with Russia facilitated increased international cooperation to effectively address the threats from Iran and North Korea's nuclear programs.

Much work remains to be done to engage Russia toward reductions in tactical nuclear weapons and in exploring possibilities to reduce non-deployed weapons, but this was an important and historic achievement.

Second on missile defense, I look forward to hearing what progress we are making on the Phased Adaptive Approach, Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD), and on making progress toward ensuring we can deploy operationally effective and reliable technology to counter the most pressing threats.

Ensuring continued strategic stability with Russia and China also remains important, as we develop capabilities to defend against threats from Iran and North Korea.

Third, I'd like to touch on our vital space assets.

The Administration submitted in January its National Security Space Strategy as an outline for leveraging opportunities for US leadership and cooperation to protect our national security space assets in an increasingly contested, congested and competitive space environment.

I am particularly interested in hearing how we plan to better take advantage of commercial capabilities and resources to help stem cost overruns.

Last, I look forward to hearing about the progress and the vision of the new US Cyber Command, CYBERCOM, and how we can best reduce our vulnerability to cyberattacks that might threaten our national security.

Welcome. I look forward to the discussion.